

# Maintaining Brand Awareness for Physicians and Medical Practices

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The healthcare services market is expanding in proportion to the aging population. Simultaneously, an increase in the number of walk-in clinics, hospital systems, urgent care networks, and private practices is also being witnessed all around.

Patients today are intent on locating the best healthcare providers to fulfill their requirements. The easy availability of relevant information facilitated by mobile and internet usage has led to patients researching local healthcare choices before making a decision.



Therefore, it is increasingly important for physicians, healthcare practices and hospitals to develop distinct branding and promote their brand to gain market attention.

## Maintaining Brand Awareness

A brand is a living business asset that has to be nurtured incessantly with focus on its key components, given this fast-changing world.

Patients are not so much concerned about the size of a practice as they are about the kind of care accorded to them. It is possible then for a small or mid-sized practice to do better than their larger counterparts where patient satisfaction and loyalty are concerned, by simply focusing on the eternal values of patient welfare.

**Commitment, Engagement, Reputation, and Responsiveness** are the four vital aspects a practice brand has to focus on.

- **Commitment** – A practice that cares for a patient’s future.
- **Engagement** – A practice that does what it says.
- **Reputation** – Patients like what the practice has to offer.
- **Responsiveness** – Patients are pleased the practice responds to their needs.

## Trust – A Key Brand Element

Trust is the foundation on which successful dental and medical brands have been built over the years. The level of trust found in a doctor-patient relationship is of significance in determining health outcomes. The degree of

trust a patient puts in a practice will influence their keenness in seeking treatment, sharing sensitive information, co-operation during treatment, and compliance with directives.

The amount of trust a patient has in a medical practice is greatly dependent on the interpersonal skills of the doctor and their staff. A doctor needs to be really good at relationship building and believe in effective communication.

It is essential that a doctor be able to listen, comprehend, and provide clear information and show that they care. This is an example of good interpersonal competencies that can help a doctor build trust among patients. In short, it is just as necessary to have the right people skills as technical skills.

## **Branding Through Your Medical Practice Website**

It is possible for a physician to turn their healthcare practice website into a prized means of brand building. A website can be the best promotion tool of realizing the greatest brand impact at the least cost for a small or medium-sized private practice having just a couple of locations.

However, it is essential for the brand to stay honest when making claims through the website and only promise what it can deliver. Uncompromising integrity is the foundation on which great websites and business are built.

The aim should be to assemble a practice that consistently exceeds patient expectations and makes it a point to deliver more than promised. This is what a doctor's website needs to be about.

## **Website Brand Maintenance: An Ongoing Process**

In this digital era, the practice's brand and its website will be interdependent. The growth of the brand makes it essential that the website, which is a valuable online tool, also grow at the same pace.

It is important to keep the practice website updated on a regular basis with all the fresh procedures, techniques, and technologies that the practice introduces. Any honors and recognitions accorded to the doctor or practice, fresh videos, and new testimonials from patients must be published on the website frequently.

When a practice has a blog, it is essential to keep it updated regularly with the most recent news items and articles. Any new social media channel that a practice uses for promotion must be integrated smoothly with its website. It is also important to keep an eye on fresh developments and technological advances in web design, videos and graphics, social media, and compatibility with mobile devices.

They should also watch out for what competitors in the same field are doing to their websites. Tracking social

media channels, the internet, and everything else related to the website is essential. Ensuring that the website remains at the top of the charts is a continuous task and not a one-time effort.

## **Brand Awareness Through Social Media**

In order to present a robust brand image, a healthcare practice needs to focus marketing efforts towards ensuring that others are talking about it with the kind of positivity that they themselves would use. This is where the influence that social media exerts gains immense significance. A practice can ensure sustainable brand recognition by narrating a story about its brand in a manner consistent with what others are saying.

### **Tips For Building Brand Awareness**

- Use of creative and distinctive social media contests and events that prompt participation and engagement of the practice's social network followers.
- Making the practice a part of existing LinkedIn groups with common interests or forming new, relevant and focused groups and getting others to join these.
- Ensure liberal usage of videos, images, and infographics on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Status updates containing enriched content attract more responses and engagement.
- The practice's social network accounts can be used to advertise new columns, blogs, articles, webinars, Slideshares, and podcasts that are created by the doctor or those associated with the practice.
- Engaging with educationists, healthcare journalists, reputed experts, leaders of industry associations, and consultants in the particular area of specialization on social media can pave the way for new opportunities for the practice on a regular basis.
- Pinpointing the social media networks with the most number of prospective patients and putting in efforts in that direction can prove beneficial for the practice. It is essential to watch out for social media trends and popular networks to derive the most mileage for the practice.
- Analytic tools on individual social networks as well as Google Analytics can be of help in tracking the practice's social media metrics. This will keep the social media campaign on course while bringing in targeted results for the practice.

## **Branding and SEO**

In 2008, Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google, had said that brands can help in sifting through the cesspool. He stated that brand affinity is hard wired and extremely fundamental to the existence of humans ensuring it will not go away. Schmidt had asserted that it must have a genetic element.

It is important to see to it that the medical practice's SEO content speaks in the voice of its brand. The search engine optimization campaign should clearly indicate the commitments and values that the brand endorses. It is also necessary to see to it that the website content, articles published online, guest blogs, newsletters, press releases, and content on social media be in keeping with the practice's brand voice.

All elements of the practice's SEO campaign such as the videos, images, patients' testimonials, quality of inbound links, as well as overall website presentation and design must reflect its brand values.

## **Living Your Brand**

A healthcare practice is, in all aspects, a people's business. All that the doctor and the practice's staff say or do will reflect on the brand. From the simple act of greeting a patient to the practice's contribution to the local community to the manner of engaging with prospective patients through the website and social media channels will be part of this image. This is the manner in which a practice lives up to its brand in entirety, and establishes a reputation and a legacy.

A practice that is honest about its brand will mark itself uniquely from the other competitors and the patients are sure to notice the difference. It is the actions, words, engagement levels, and emotional responses received from the practice that shape the patient's impression.

### **About the Author:**

*Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of doctors. With a team of 180+ full time marketers, [www.ekwa.com](http://www.ekwa.com) helps doctors who know where they want to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.*